

	<p>Illinois Small Business Development Center Network</p> <p>WEEKLY CONNECTION</p> <p>Entrepreneurship ~ Innovation ~ Technology</p>	
---	---	---

"Professional Guidance for Business Growth"

March 23, 2015

In Today's Weekly Connection:

-  **Spotlight on Success – Simply Amish and Branded Country Wear**
-  **Network News and Moves – Welcome Esther King**
-  **Valued Resources**
-  **QuickBooks 2015**
-  **Chicago Area Emerging Leaders Program**
-  **Spring SBIR/STTR Conference**
-  **IRS Webinar for Small Businesses**
-  **Maximizing Neoserra**
-  **America's SBDC Network Connect**

Spotlight on Success – Simply Amish

Simply Amish has been hand-crafting high-quality and environmentally friendly furniture from America's richest hardwoods for years. The Arcola, IL based company believes that "Amish" is more than just a style; it is an illustration of the beauty and excellence that stems from the individual craftsmanship and dedication required to produce hand-finished furniture.

Simply Amish has been a client of the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the International Trade Center (ITC) at the Champaign County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) since spring 2014. Kathie Cravens, the ITC Director, assists the firm in expanding their presence in foreign markets. She has helped Simply Amish with research, export packaging and understanding export processes.

Charles Curry of Simply Amish elaborates on this assistance: "Kathie Cravens and her team of international experts have been a tremendous help in navigating byzantine rules and regulations pertaining to exporting...whatever the arcane international question, we can rely on the ITC to help answer it."

Learn more at: <http://www.simplyamish.com/>

Spotlight on Success – Branded Country Wear

Seth and Stacey Landwehr recently opened Branded Country Wear in Peoria after receiving business advising from Ross Miller at the Illinois Small Business Development Center

(SBDC) at Bradley University. Branded Country Wear is a western-style retailer; "We offer anything you can wear with cowboy boots — along with the boots, themselves," Ms. Landwehr said.

The couple first visited the SBDC in early 2014. They attended one of the SBDC business workshops regularly offered at Bradley. Ms. Landwehr noted that "the class made it seem very doable. We learned what we needed for a business plan because that's what we took to the bank." Ross helped the Landwehrs develop that plan and financial projections they shopped to local lending institutions.

To better compete, Ms. Landwehr said the store will match prices from other retailers and do special orders for customers looking for something not in stock. "We're also working to let customers shop online with us," she said.

To learn more visit: <http://brandedcountrywear.com> Please check out a recent article on Branded Country Wear that appeared in the Peoria Journal Star by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Network News and Moves – Welcome Esther King

Please join us in welcoming Esther Joy King to DCEO as our new Deputy Director for the Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Technology. She just joined the DCEO team on Tuesday, March 17th and has already visited one of our Illinois SBDC-ITC locations at ICNC and participated on our Illinois SBDC March Monthly Connection Call this morning. Esther comes to DCEO from the Law Offices of Kirkland & Ellis in Chicago. Welcome, Esther!!!

Valued Resources – Top 10 Small Business Blogs

Chris Ducker lists and explains the value of his favorite small business blogs at this link: <http://www.chrisducker.com/best-small-business-blogs-2015/>

QuickBooks 2015

2015 QuickBooks Available - Go to the [America's SBDC website Members Only](#) area and click on "Partner Resources" to access information on how to download or get training materials from "Intuit-QuickBooks."

Chicago Area Emerging Leaders Program

Emerging Leaders is an intensive executive-level training initiative to accelerate growth of high potential small businesses located in American cities. Developed by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Emerging Leaders offers qualified business owners powerful benefits including innovative strategies to grow, acquire financing, assess new markets and leverage networking.

The Emerging Leaders training is open to small businesses located in the Chicagoland area that:

- Have annual revenues of at least \$400,000
- Have been in business for at least three (3) years
- Have at least one employee other than the owner

This training is not for start-up businesses. Learn more at: <http://www.sba.gov/emergingleaders>

Spring SBIR/STTR Conference

Register today for the 2015 Spring National SBIR/STTR Conference in Washington, DC on June 15 – 17, 2015. Learn more at: http://nationalinnovationsummit.com/program/National_SBIR_Conference.html

IRS Webinar for Small Businesses

Webinar Spotlights Payment Options for Individuals and Small Businesses

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service will hold a free webinar next week designed to help individuals, small businesses and tax professionals better understand various tax payment alternatives, including options for resolving complex collection cases. The webinar titled, 2015 Payment Alternatives When You Owe the IRS, will take place on Wednesday, March 25 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Eastern Time. Topics include the expanded eligibility for IRS online payment agreements, and issues affecting taxpayers with complex delinquent tax obligations, such as the proper completion of collection information statements and selling or refinancing property when there are federal tax liens.

With this year's April 15 tax deadline fast approaching, this webinar may be particularly helpful for taxpayers and tax preparers who are now finding that they or their clients owe personal or business taxes and are having difficulty paying for 2014, or a prior year.

Taxpayers who owe taxes can now choose among several quick and easy e-pay options, including the newest and easiest, IRS [Direct Pay](#). More information on payment agreement options available to people who owe tax can also be found [here](#).

For tax professionals, this webinar qualifies for continuing education credit. To register or view archived versions of past webinars, visit the [Webinars for Small Businesses](#) page on IRS.gov. Topics of popular recent webinars have included tip income reporting and the home office deduction.

Maximizing Neoserra – Entering Attendee Information Manually

To enter training event attendees manually **uncheck** the "Neoserra will calculate all fee and attendee demographic data based upon attendees listed." See the screenshot below. The sentence & box are small and easy to miss.

The screenshot displays a web form for configuring a training event. The form includes several fields and checkboxes:

- Primary Training Topic:** A dropdown menu with "Business Start-up/Preplanning" selected.
- Status:** A dropdown menu with "Open" selected.
- Allow Waitlist?** A checkbox that is currently unchecked.
- Program Format:** A dropdown menu with "(Undefined)" selected.
- Number of Sessions:** A text input field containing the number "1".
- Attendees, Unlisted:** A text input field containing the number "0".
- Neoserra will calculate all fee and attendee demographic data based upon attendees listed?** A checkbox that is checked.
- Language Used:** A dropdown menu with "English" selected.
- Pre-event Survey:** A dropdown menu with "(No selection)" selected.
- Post-event Survey:** A dropdown menu with "(No selection)" selected.

On the right side of the form, there are two additional fields: **Maximum Attendees:** (empty) and **Unit History:** with a dropdown menu showing "Ongoing".

Maximizing Neoserra – Thank You

Thank you for your considerable patience trying to correct the Change in Staff and Jobs Retained errors. We understand that the process is time consuming and confusing and appreciate your efforts at getting the data input correctly. Remember to call Tom Becker at 217/498-7781 with any questions or correction needs.

America's SBDC Network Connect

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to access the latest issue of [America's SBDC Network Connect Newsletter](#). In this issue you will find information about the recently completed America's SBDC Spring Meeting and 35th Anniversary Kick Off Reception and SBDC Client Showcase. It was a tremendous event. Be sure to [CLICK HERE](#) for more information and details.

=====

The **WEEKLY CONNECTION** is distributed by the Illinois SBDC and DCEO Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology each Monday to members of the DCEO Illinois SBDC Network to provide the service delivery partners with regular updates on small business issues, opportunities and resources. You may send any information to share with the Illinois SBDC Network to Tom.Becker@illinois.gov. Please feel free to forward this update to other interested resource providers and key stakeholders.

=====

